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BUREAU OF PROVINCIAL INFORMATION.

BULLETIN No. 25.
(Special Edition.)

THE GAME FISHES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

—BY—

JOHN PEASE BABCOCK,
*Deputy Commissioner of Fisheries
of the Province of British Columbia, Canada.*



THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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VICTORIA, B. C. :

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1910.



A well-known Victoria sportsman. One of his rods and a spring salmon which he captured with it near Trial Island in August.



Stiff poling on the Nimkish River.

HONOURABLE W. J. BOWSER, K. C.,

*Attorney-General and Commissioner of Fisheries,
Victoria, B. C.*

SIR,—I have the honour to submit for your approval an edition of Bulletin No. 25, "The Game Fishes of British Columbia."

A second edition of this Bulletin, written and prepared by John Peace Babcock, Deputy Commissioner of Fisheries, is published to meet a general demand and to satisfy the many inquiries received respecting the game fishes of the Province, their habits, distribution, and the seasons and methods of capture.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

FRANK I. CLARKE,
Secretary, Bureau of Provincial Information.

*Victoria, British Columbia,
June 11th, 1910.*

On the Shuswap River. "The upper stretches of th is river are but little fished, though at times the sport is of the best."—Leckie-Ewing.



THE GAME FISH OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

—BY—

JOHN PEASE BABCOCK,

Deputy Commissioner of Fisheries for the Province.

———:O:———

IT is the purpose of this short paper to tell of the game fishes of the Province of British Columbia. It is not intended to be exhaustive. Fishermen seeking more detail than is contained herein, or maps of the Province, are requested to write to the Bureau of Information of the Provincial Government, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

British Columbia, having a coast line of over 7,000 miles, being the source of the Columbia, Fraser, Thompson, Kootenay, Skeena, and many other large but less-known rivers, containing fresh-water lakes of great extent, like the Kootenay, Okanagan, Quesnel, Chilco, Shuswap, and the Harrison, besides thousands of lesser lakes, it is not surprising that she should stand at the head of the Provinces of Canada in the wealth of her game fishes. The salmon products of the Province alone amount to from \$3,000,000 to \$5,000,000 per year. Upwards of 33,000,000 of salmon that were bred in her waters were captured in 1905. Two of her five species of salmon may be taken with troll or fly. The fresh waters of the interior of British Columbia teem with the only true trout indigenous to the waters of Canada. Her game fishes comprise two species of salmon, several species of trout, Arctic grayling, and two charr, one of which is not indigenous to Eastern Canada. Of the salmon, only two—the “Spring” and the “Coho”—are of particular interest to anglers, because the other three species cannot be taken with any lure. The Spring or Tyee salmon of the Province is the largest and gamest of the salmon family. It is the one known in Oregon as the “Chinook” or the “Columbia,” in California as the “Quinnat,” and in Alaska as the “King” or “Tyee.” It freely takes the troll in fresh or salt water and occasionally rises to an artificial fly. Sir Richard Musgrave killed a specimen with rod and line at the mouth of Campbell River in September, 1897, that weighed 70 pounds, and measured 4 feet 3 inches in length. A plaster cast of this magnificent fish may be seen in the Provincial Museum in Victoria.



An early morning catch of salmon off Brodie Ledge, Victoria, B. C.



A cast before a dip in Long Lake, near Vernon.

A great many of these powerful salmon, weighing from a few pounds to sixty odd, are taken every year by anglers in the salt-water reaches from Victoria to the waters at the extreme northern end of Vancouver Island and all along the coast of the Mainland. More are taken in the vicinity of Victoria, Vancouver, Cowichan Bay, Alberni Canal, and the mouth of Campbell River, because they are more fished for. At some seasons of the year they may be taken in every estuary and at the mouth of almost every river in the Province. The best months are from July to November. At many points on the coast of Vancouver Island they are taken as early as February. The Indians of the west coast, during the early spring, keep the markets of Victoria and Vancouver well supplied with these big fish, which they catch with hook and line. During the greater portion of the year the fresh-fish trade of the two cities named is supplied with both Spring and Coho salmon caught with hook and line. The latter are more numerous than the former, and while of smaller size, generally, are just as game. Indeed, many anglers consider the Coho more game than the Spring salmon.

It is often stated that the Pacific salmon do not take a fly, but having caught both the Spring and Coho salmon in the Prov-



The great pool in the Kootenay River, below Bonnington Falls, is famous for its beauty and its game fish.
May to November.

ince with a fly, the writer feels justified in denying this statement. Trolling with rod and line in fresh and salt waters is, however, the favourite method in use amongst anglers for catching salmon in the Province. Few anglers appear to have sufficient patience to try for salmon with a fly, possibly because trolling produces many more fish with much less effort. I have no doubt that the same amount of energy and persistence one sees displayed on Eastern Canadian, English, and Scotch salmon rivers by anglers who have to depend upon the fly to take the fish, would raise an equal number of salmon in the estuaries and rivers of British Columbia. One familiar with bait-casting methods wonders that it is not more practised in the waters of the Province, as it is an easy matter to place one's boat or canoe in waters where the salmon are breaching with great frequency, and where a spoon can easily be placed within their sight.

The water best known and frequented for the capture of large Spring or "Tyee" salmon is at the mouth of Campbell River, on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island, just south of Seymour Narrows and north of Cape Mudge, where, in July, August, and September, one may see anglers from every clime hunting for record fish. Like most other coast points, one may reach this place by steamers either from Vancouver or Victoria, though many go there and to other points along the coast in their own yachts. Campbell River holds the record for big fish, but for numbers one may do as well at Cowichan Bay, Alberni Canal, and at many other points along the coast. That large expanse of water which lies to the north of Vancouver



A 28-1b. Okanagan Lake Trout.

Island is seldom fished by anglers, though the rivers that there empty into the sea are all salmon rivers, some of which produce as many Spring and Coho salmon as the mighty Fraser itself. On the Mainland, the Harrison River, above the City of Vancouver, is the most accessible and productive water for those who desire to take salmon with a fly. Very few Spring salmon are there taken by that method, but one may take a good many Coho in October and even as late as November.



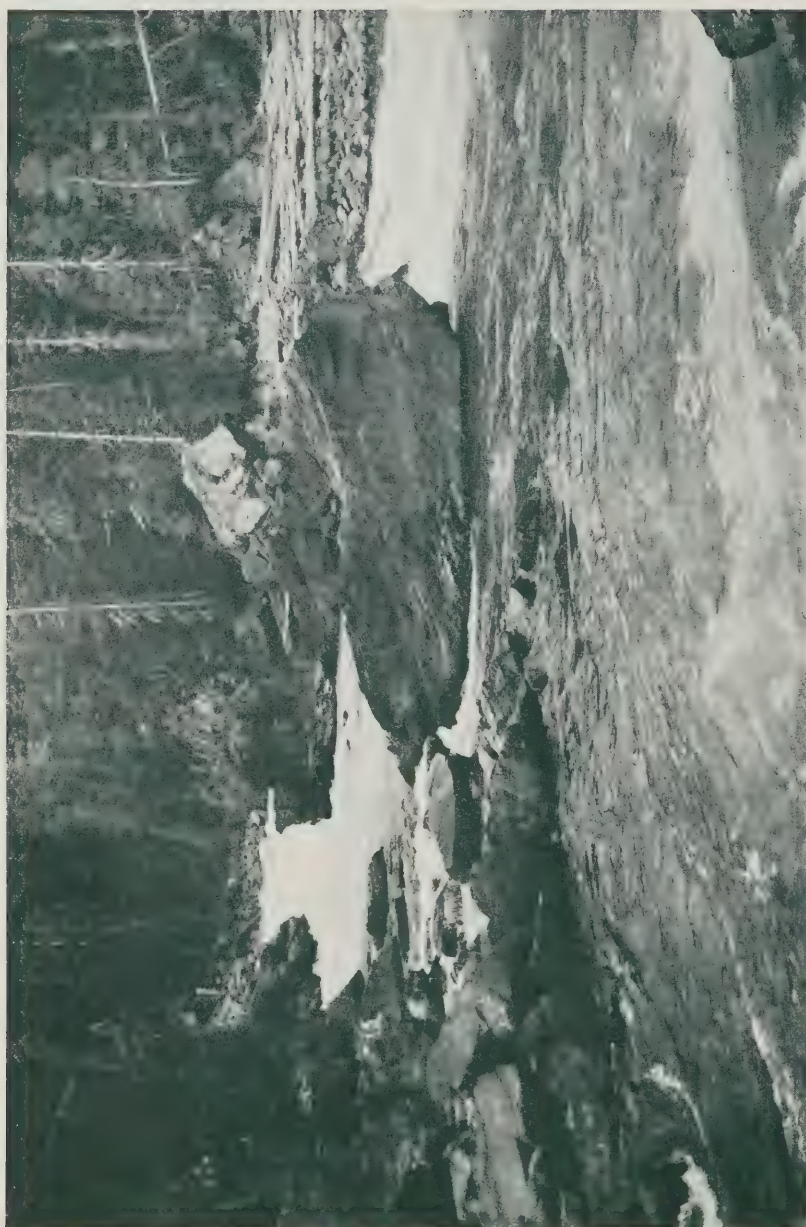
In the Rockies of British Columbia the lakes and streams are filled with trout.

The trout of British Columbia comprise all of the recognised varieties of the Pacific Coast, though varying greatly in colouring and markings; and because of these and other slight modifications present many difficulties to the ichthyologist, so that it is not surprising that the fisherman finds it difficult to determine just which variety of trout he is catching; but, notwithstanding the doubts he may have upon that score, he will never be in doubt as to the game qualities of whatever variety of trout he may be engaged with in the waters of the Province, be they steel-head, rainbow, or cut-throat.



A morning's catch with rod and line at Campbell River, July, 1906.

The steel-head trout of the Province more closely resembles in habit, form, and colour the salmon of Europe than any other fish found in the Pacific. By a few writers the steel-head in many sections is still classed as a Pacific salmon. It, like the Pacific salmon, is generally anadromous and spawns only in fresh water; but, unlike the Pacific salmon, it survives spawning and returns to the sea, where it remains until it again comes into fresh water to spawn. In the Kootenay and Okanagan Lakes the steel-head variety is very common, and does not go to salt water at all. Specimens of the steel-head taken from salt water are commonly seen in the markets of Vancouver and Victoria during the winter and spring months. They run from 4 to 20 pounds in weight, though occasional specimens weighing as high as 36 pounds have been taken. As a game fish, many anglers, including the writer, consider the steel-head the gamest fish taken in fresh waters.



The falls in the North Fork of the Quesnel River. "I caught many fine trout in the pools of the Quesnel."

The numerous varieties of trout found in the upper tributaries of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers, and in the great lakes and streams that belong to the Columbia watershed, within the Province, are not easily distinguished one from another. As already stated, the large specimens taken from the great lakes, in technical character, follow very closely the sea run of the steel-head: yet one also finds specimens with the well-known markings of the cut-throat and rainbow varieties. Because of the many differences in colour, form, and habit, they are given many names, and offer a productive field for the student who delights in fine differentiations.



A favourite stretch of the South Thompson, near Kamloops.

In addition to the salmon and trout which abound in our waters, there are two species of the charr that afford both sport and food. Of these the most common is the "Dolly Varden" or "Bull Trout" (*Salvelinus malma*). It is found in most streams and lakes on the Mainland, and also in tidewater, and ranges in weight from a few ounces up to 30 pounds. Specimens in excess of 6 pounds in weight are seldom taken with a fly. The adults freely take any style of spoon. The other charr (*namaycush*), the trout of Lakes Superior and Michigan, is not common south of the 52nd parallel, and, so far, has not been found in any waters on Vancouver Island or in salt water. Only the very young are taken with a fly. They are plentiful in Quesnel and other northern lakes, are not such fierce fighters as the steel-head and other trout, but are one of the best, if not the best, fresh-water table-fish in the



On the Cowichan River. For the best sport this river should be fished from a canoe in April, May, and June.

Province. In the rivers and streams of the Cassiar District—the extreme north-west section of the Province so famed for its moose, caribou, mountain sheep, and great grizzly bear—the Arctic grayling affords great sport, as they are active and game.



One of the many good places on the great pool at Bonnington Falls.

Returning to the trout of the Province, the writer does not know of any lake or stream within its boundaries from which the angler may not at some season of the year fill the largest of creels in a day's fishing. In many of the smaller coast rivers and streams the season is limited to a few weeks in the spring, and again in the fall after the first heavy rains, though an expert angler may succeed at any time in taking a few big ones from any of the large streams. On the larger rivers and lakes of the interior the seasons vary somewhat, depending chiefly upon the spring and early summer freshets. Either just before or just after high water is considered the best season for angling the streams; very few of the lake-feeding streams can be successfully fished during high water. In the big lakes, like the Kootenay, Okanagan, and Shuswap, the best trolling is to be had in June and July. Formerly the great Okanagan Lake afforded rare sport during the winter months to the angler who wanted big fish, but the present law provides for a closed season from November 15th to May 1st.

Fly-fishing in the big lakes, at the mouths of tributary streams, is usually at its best during the period of high water, and as soon as the warm weather brings the flies out in the early spring. Nothing easier than fishing from a boat at the mouths of the tributary streams of Kootenay Lake—such as Fry Creek, near Kaslo—can



Kootenay Indian fishermen capture a great many large trout by trolling in Kootenay Lake in May, June, and July.

be imagined. As one writer well expressed it, "It's a fat man's game and too easy." Considering the sport to be had at the mouths of the tributary streams of the Kootenay, Okanagan, and Shuswap Lakes, it is to be wondered at that so few anglers are to be found there during the fishing season.



"There were too many trout in the Lakelse River—a tributary of the Skeena."

Most of the fishing waters of the Province are easily accessible by steamer, rail, or stage. The waggon-roads and trails of the Province are exceptionally good. Even the practically unfished waters of the Cassiar and Cariboo Districts are within easy distance to the man of leisure who wishes first-class sport on the unfrequented waterways of a healthy and wonderfully beautiful country, where there are trout and charr in great abundance, and where in September, October, and November one may almost daily see silver-tipped, grizzly, brown, and black bears, as well as caribou and moose, either along the shores of the lakes and streams or in the big marsh meadows.

Along the coast line, and on its streams, the Indians with their wonderful canoes, hewn from great cedar and spruce trees, are always available. Boats of every description are obtainable on the main waterways and large lakes. Even on most of the small lakes



Fry Creek Falls, near Kaslo. "After catching all the trout we could use, from Kootenay Lake at the mouth of Fry Creek, M. R. went up-stream to the beautiful falls and there caught eight more."



Leckie-Ewing on Okanagan Lake, Okanagan Lake region, in his opinion, "is unsurpassed by any in the Province as an all-round spot for sport with rod or gun."



On the Cowichan River. "The Indians held the canoe at the head of the riffle, below Siwash rip, where I caught the largest fish taken on the trip—a seven-pounder."



Fly-fishing at the outlet of Cowichan Lake is good in April, May, and June. At the head of the lake the fishing is best at the mouth of the stream.



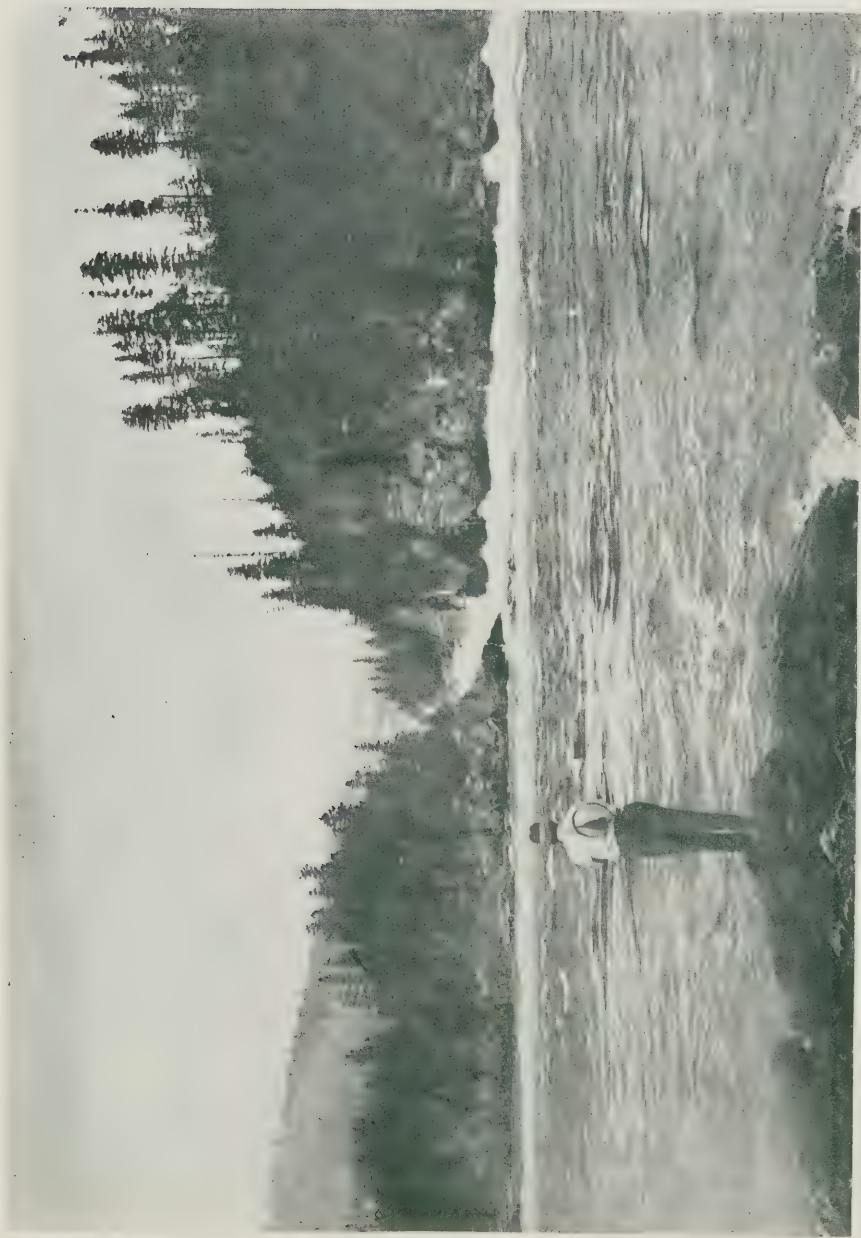
The upper falls in Kootenay River. "We caught many a fine trout between the upper and the lower falls."

that are so numerous in the hills and mountains in every section, and where there are trout in unbelievable numbers, boats or craft of some description suitable for fishing are easily secured. One intending to make an extended trip through the northern waters of the Province should be provided with a canvas boat. In most districts of the Province anglers will find good hotel accommodation accessible to the fishing waters.



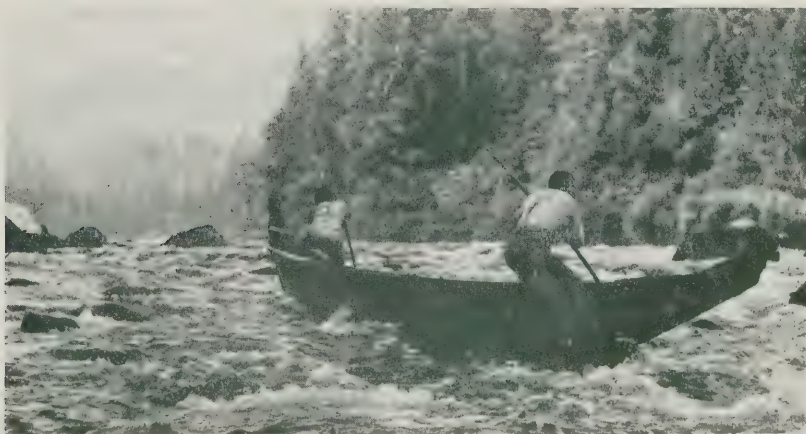
One way of killing a trout.

To the canoeist, the rivers of the Province, with their chains of great and small lakes and connecting channels, afford the best and most attractive opportunities for sport of any part of the west. From Cowichan Lake down the fifty-odd miles of the Cowichan River to tidewater, as well as the hundreds of miles of the Fraser, Skeena, Kootenay, and Columbia Rivers, the most cautious as well as the most daring boatmen will find rivers to their taste, upon which they may journey for days amidst scenery unsurpassed, and where fish and game abound. Since Simon Fraser, a century ago, made his famous canoe journey of discovery through the mighty canyons of that great river which now bears his name, adventurers, woodsmen, and prospectors have traversed most of the waterways of British Columbia; but to the man with a rod, a camera, or a pencil and paper, these rugged highways are,



Fishing from the rocks near the head of the great pool below Bonnington Falls, Kootenay River.

many of them, unknown. Many of the coast rivers, such as the Cowichan and the Nimkish, afford safe and delightful waterways, where one may journey through forests and canyons where nature is yet seen in her pristine beauty for much of the way; where the fish rise eagerly to your flies; where deer look down from the high rocks on the banks; and where neither troublesome flies, venomous snakes, nor poisonous plants are found. The Cowichan in April, May, and June is the most beautifully wooded, flower and fern-bedecked water-road known to the writer. The famous and beautiful Nipigon River in Ontario, of which so much has been written, may afford more fish for a longer period of the year than the Cowichan or the Nimkish, but it is not comparable with either from a scenic point of view, and the trout of the Cowichan are more game, and there are no flies to distract the sportsman. The Cowichan produces excellent fishing both in the spring and fall, while the Nimkish affords better fishing in the autumn than in the spring.



The Nimkish River affords the best sport in the fall.

From the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company in eastern British Columbia three most attractive long canoe journeys are offered—the Kootenay, the Columbia, and the Okanagan Rivers. One may start upon the glacier-fed streams and journey hundreds of miles upon comparatively placid waters through the gigantic mountains of the Rockies, Selkirks, and Cascade ranges, now into the wilds, now over bottomless lakes, over and around cascades and falls, past beautifully situated villages, productive fields and orchards, thence out of the Province into the States of Washington and Oregon, and on, if one wishes, to the

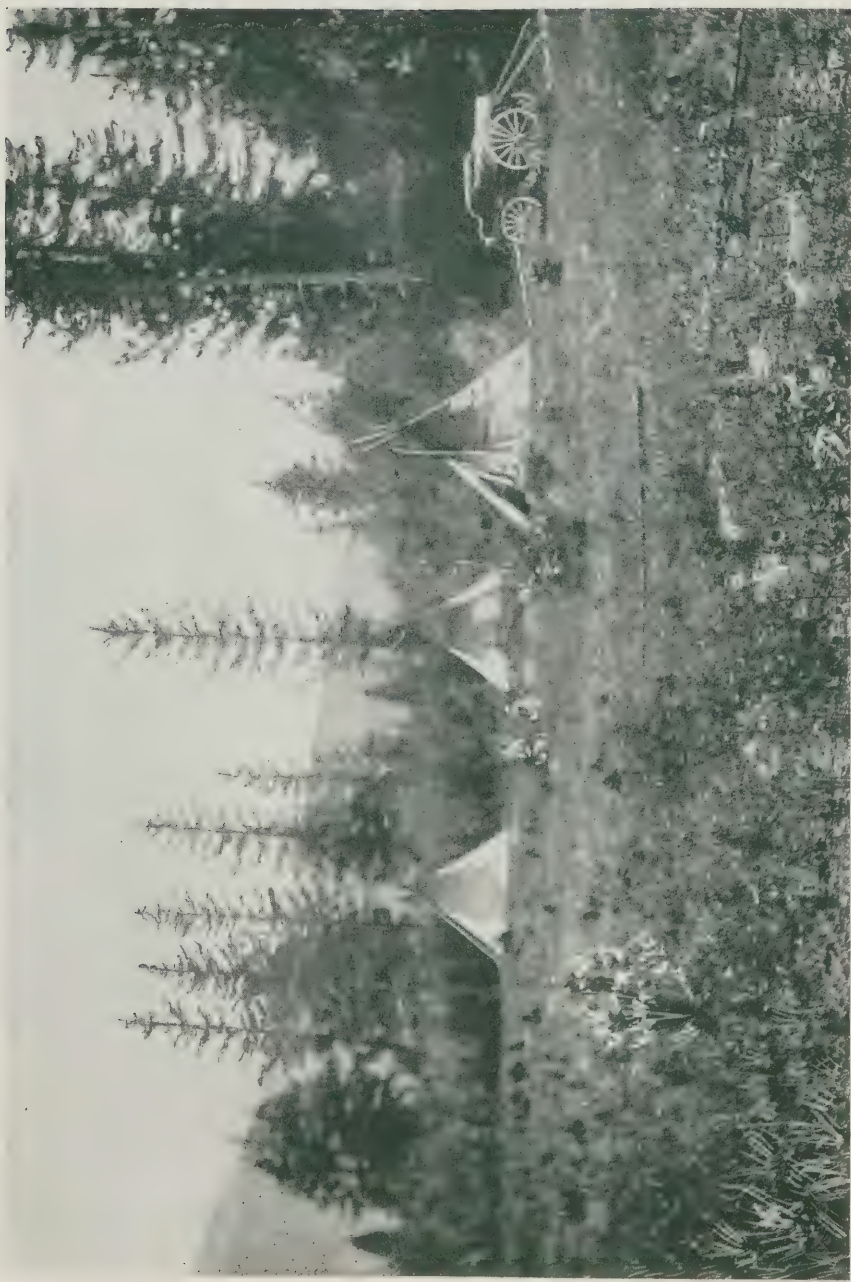


The head of the great falls in the Kootenay River. "The Kootenay is one of the best trout streams in the West."

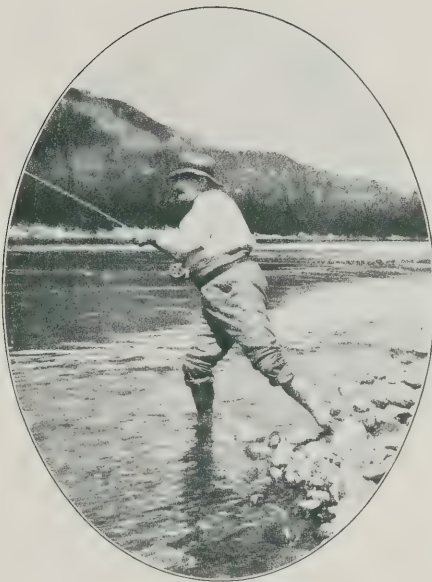
waters of the Pacific that wash the beach at Astoria. When camping along the Provincial part of these waters in August, September, and October, there are no flies or other insects to bother one; little or no rain, and the waters are cool and clear, and the fishing is excellent. There are no preserves for trout or birds or deer, though shooting is not permitted by law previous to September 1st, and mountain sheep and wapiti cannot be killed at any time. To run the last-mentioned rivers, one needs bring his own canoe or boat. In running the coast rivers and the rivers of the north, it is customary to engage the Indians, who supply their own canoes. Men who have travelled in the wilds tell us that the coast Indians of British Columbia and south-eastern Alaska have no equals in the management of a canoe up-stream, that with the aid of their unshod canoe poles they can go anywhere. A great pleasure awaits the fisherman on his first canoe trip in British Columbia, and not all his excitement and joy will come from his rod, though the fish are large and game.



On the Coquiltlam—"Just a moment too soon."



Camp of Kootenay Indian fishermen near the Skookumchuck River—tributary of Upper Kootenay River.



Tom Procter has an anxious moment.

In fishing for salmon in British Columbia, strong rods are necessary. Many use the English and Scotch two-hand rods. The medium-length rods are better suited to fishing from boat or canoe. When fishing near a convenient beach like that at Campbell River, where landings are easily made, the long rods are better, as one can go ashore to land the fish, but where landings are not convenient, as at Cowichan, Oak Bay, and most of the reaches where trolling is done, short rods are much more serviceable in bringing the salmon alongside for the gaff. American anglers generally use the short, heavy two-

jointed tarpon rods, since they bring the fish to gaff quicker than the longer English rods; but it is questionable whether there is as much sport in the play. Reels for salmon-fishing should have a capacity of from 150 to 200 yards of 24-thread American or No. F. English linen line. Heavy fish are caught sometimes with lines 100 yards long, but in most such cases much more of the credit is due to the 'clever handling of the boat or canoe. If one's boatman is an Indian it may be necessary to direct his movements in the playing of the first fish, but once he understands what is expected of him—and most of them do not have to be told—he is very keen to follow or pull away from your fish as the necessity arises. In pattern and size, the spoons used to take salmon almost equal in variety and number the artificial flies used by trout fishermen. At Campbell River, during the past season, a large pear-shaped lead spoon, with closely intersecting lines scratched upon the dull-coloured surface every day or so, was in much demand, and is said to have been the most killing. The regulation shapes in nickel and copper spoons of from 4 to 6 inches in length are, however, more commonly used in trolling for salmon in the Province. In fly-fishing for Pacific salmon, the writer has found the medium-size Scotch flies of bright colours and silver bodies most serviceable.



Between the upper and the lower falls of Kootenay River. "In these wild waters I fished with immense delight and great success."



In the Arrow Lake country.



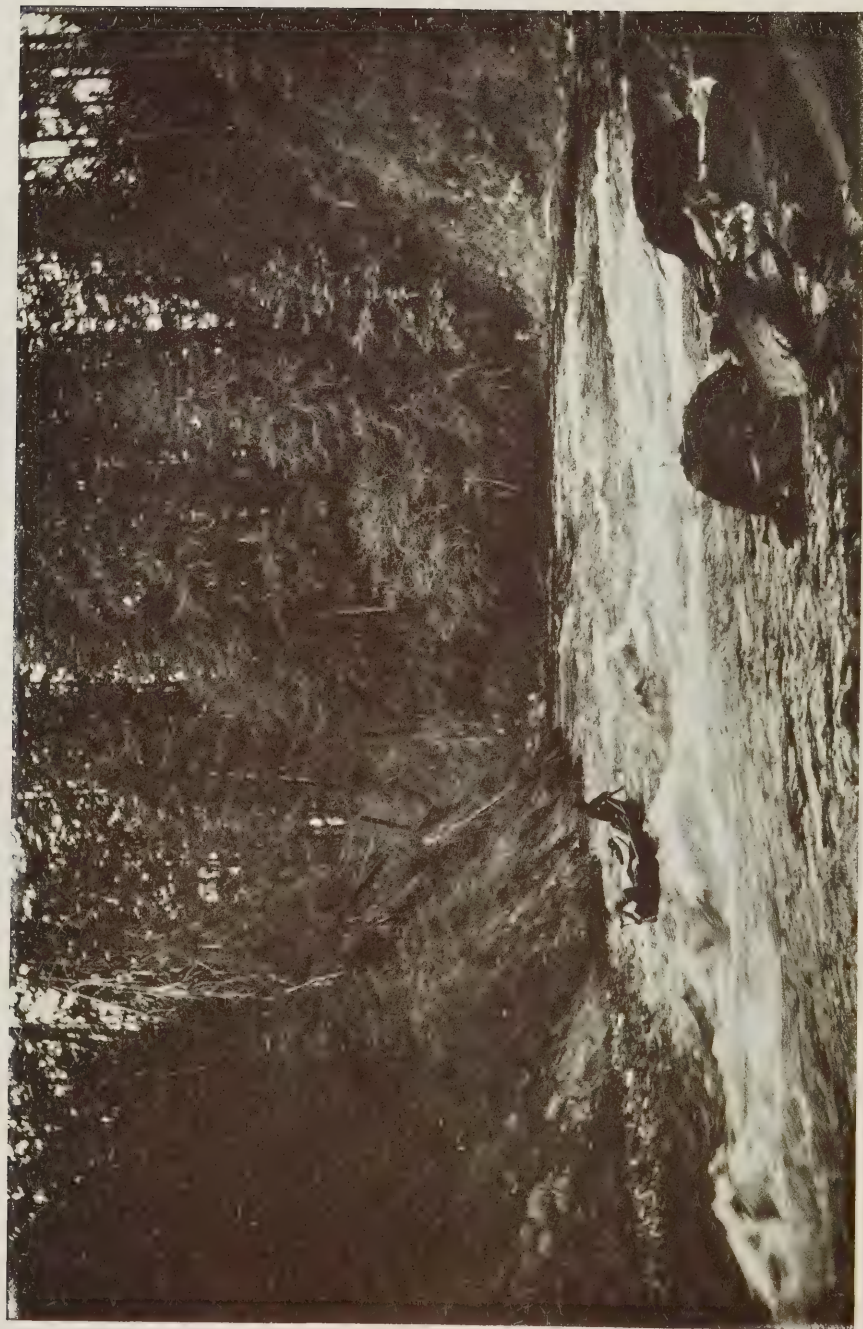
Weighing and recording Tyee salmon on the beach at Campbell River, August, 1907. "Weight, 43 pounds; length, 48½ inches."



Vancouver Island Indians are great fishermen, and their canoes furnished the model of the American clipper ship.



After salmon in a Vancouver Island Canoe—Alberni.



On the Cowichan River. "My wife and I ran all the rapids of this river, except two, in the canoe with the Indians."

For trout-fishing, the standard 10½ to 11-foot split cane or bamboo rod, from 7 to 9 ounces in weight, is generally conceded to be the best for such rivers as the Thompson and Kootenay; but for streams less rough and swift and the "fish lakes" of the mountains, lighter rods will afford more sport and pleasure. Reels for trout-fishing should carry 100 yards of line for the big-stream fishing, yet, on many of the lakes, shorter lines add something to the occasional anxious moments in the play of a big fish. Trout flies of small size are generally used on interior waters, though



The last rush of a big trout.

flies of medium and large size are oftentimes serviceable, according to the condition of the water. For the coast and Vancouver Island streams, larger and more gaudy patterns are in greater demand. Anglers will find that tackle dealers at Vancouver and Victoria carry full stocks, and all through the interior one can obtain the popular flies used on neighbouring waters.



The Skookumchuck River, a tributary of the headwaters of the Kootenay River, a famous trout stream.

The Provincial Government requires non-residents to take out a Provincial Licence for angling, as well as a licence for killing big game. One licence will cover the entire Province. Applications for angling and shooting licences should be made to the Provincial Game Warden, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

The writer is indebted to Fleming Bros., Victoria; Leckie-Ewing, of Okanagan Landing; A. L. Coombs, San Francisco; and Dr. Bernard Scribner, R. N., and others, for some of the photographs used in illustrating this Bulletin.



Specimens of trout from Eagle River, near Fernie.



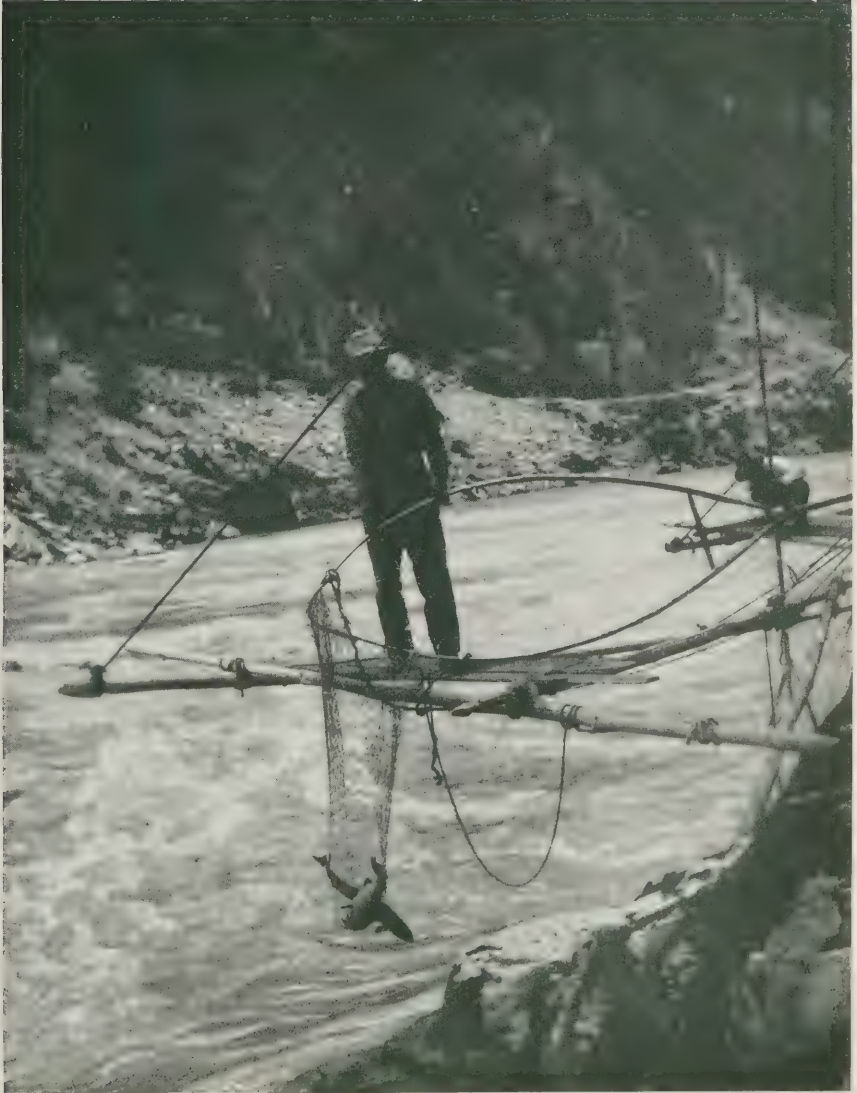
Even the dog assisted in loading the scow with salmon brailled from the traps on Vancouver Island.



Spring Salmon, 53 and 55 lbs. Campbell River, Vancouver Island.



As we passed up the Fraser River, to fish the Thompson, we saw, from the train, the Indians catching salmon in the great canyon above Yale.



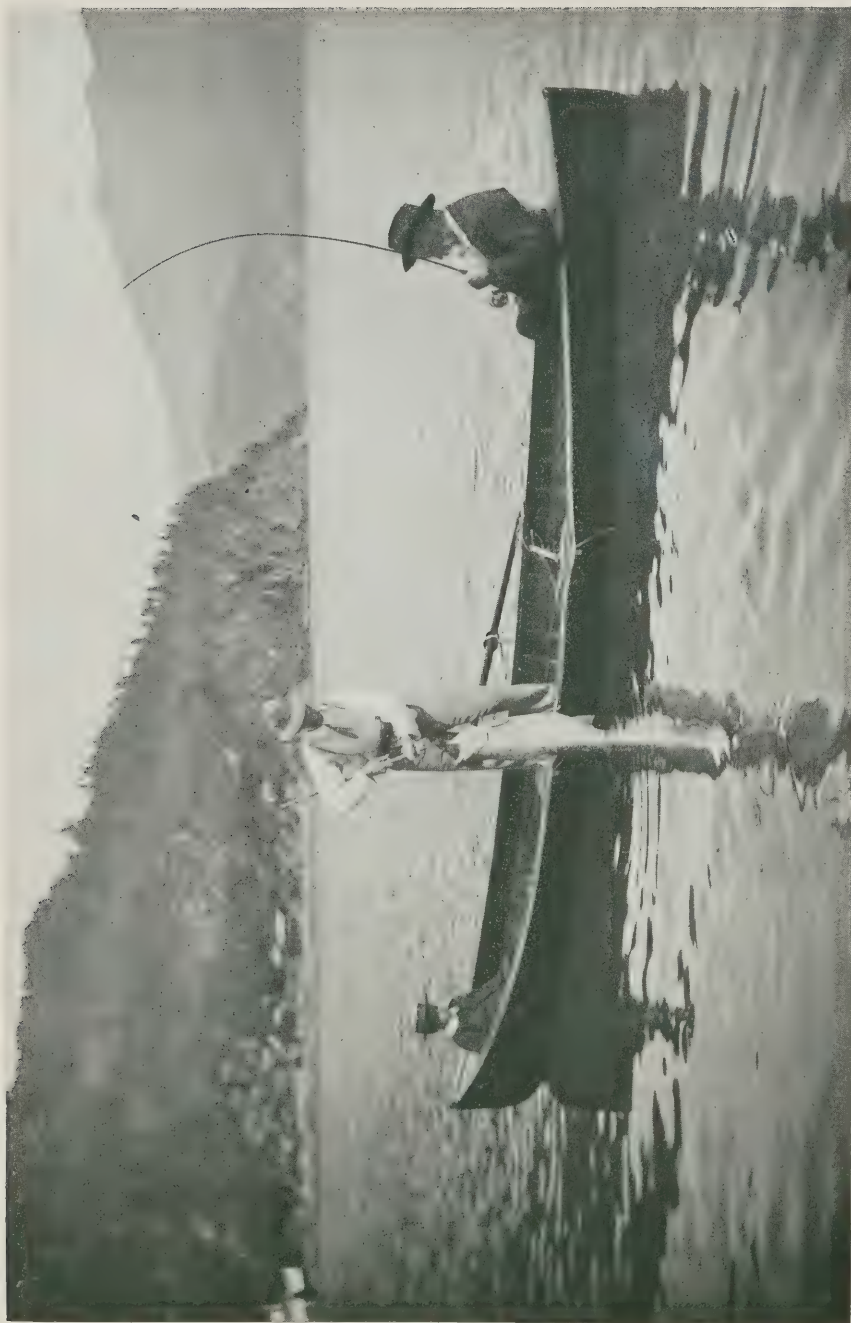
Indians catching salmon in the canyon of the Fraser. "While I watched them they took an average of thirty salmon an hour."



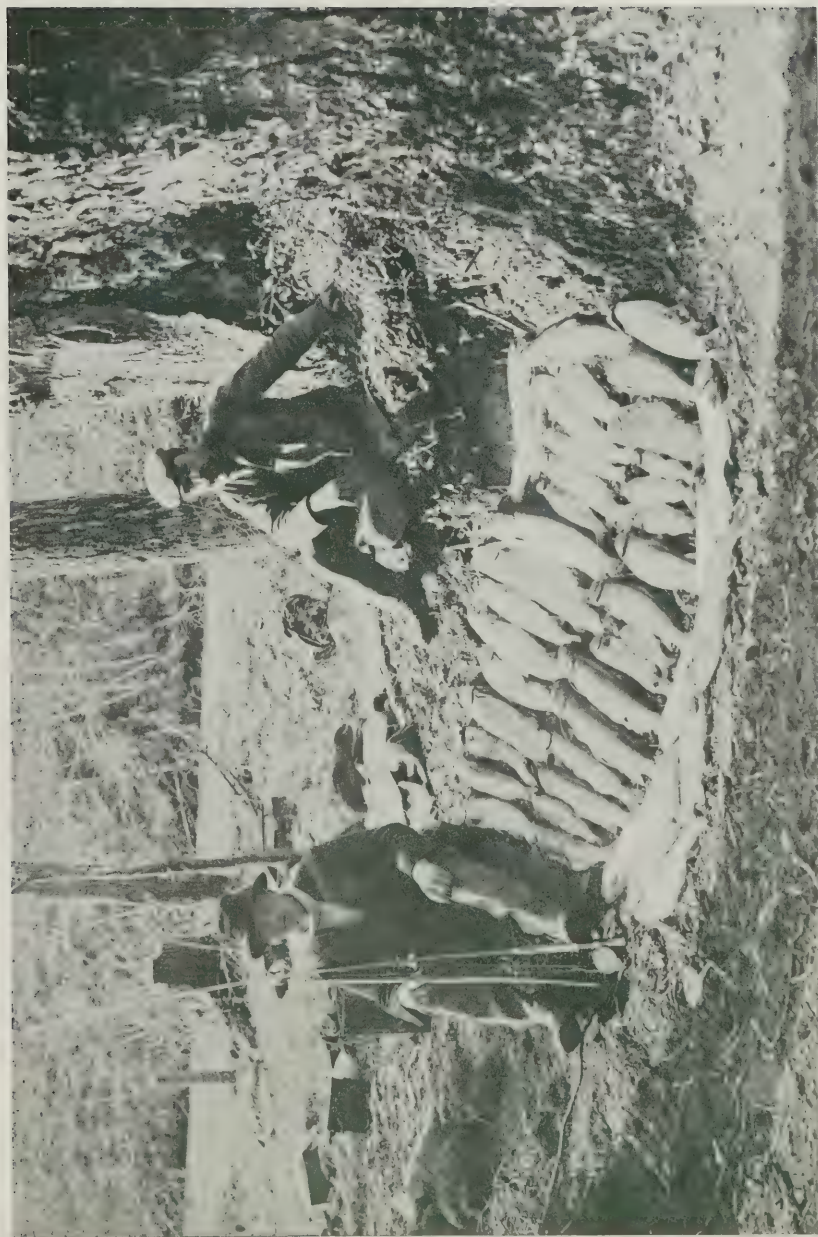
There are lots of trout awaiting you below the falls in Stamp River, the outlet of Great Central Lake, near Alberní.



A Kootenay Indian family at Moyie Lake.



Landing a 20-pound trout on Kootenay Lake, near Kaslo, in July, 1907. Season, May to November.



Marpole and Edwards's catch on the Cheakamus, near the City of Vancouver.



The Somas River, near Alberni, offers great sport.



Cayoosh Creek—In the land of the Big Horn and the trout.



Cape Mudge Indian totem. Note the salmon in the emblem. The Indians catch a great many salmon in the Strait off Cape Mudge.



Hon. Hamar Greenwood and Mr. Bonnell on the beach at Campbell River with two salmon, weighing 48 and 52 pounds, which they took with rod and line, September 1st, 1907.



"Everybody catches salmon in Oak Bay from July to November. It's safe and you are sure to catch the king of fish."



Cayoosh Creek, near Lillooet. A good trout stream in the spring—following a big salmon run.



Seton and Anderson Lakes from the Bridge River trail. Showing the connecting stream—Portage Creek.

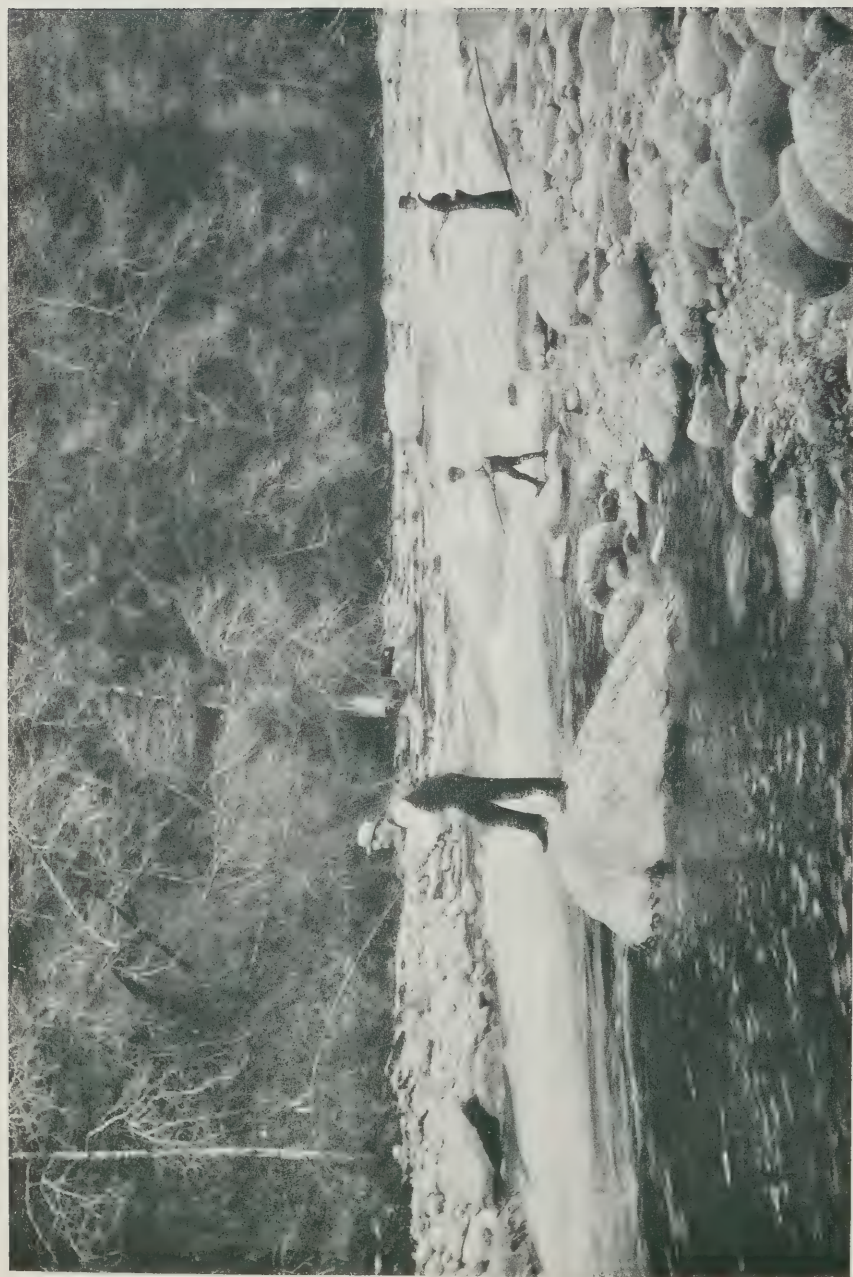


On the Thompson River, between Kamloops and Ashcroft. "Throw a silver-bodied fly over the moving fish there and it is taken with a rush."

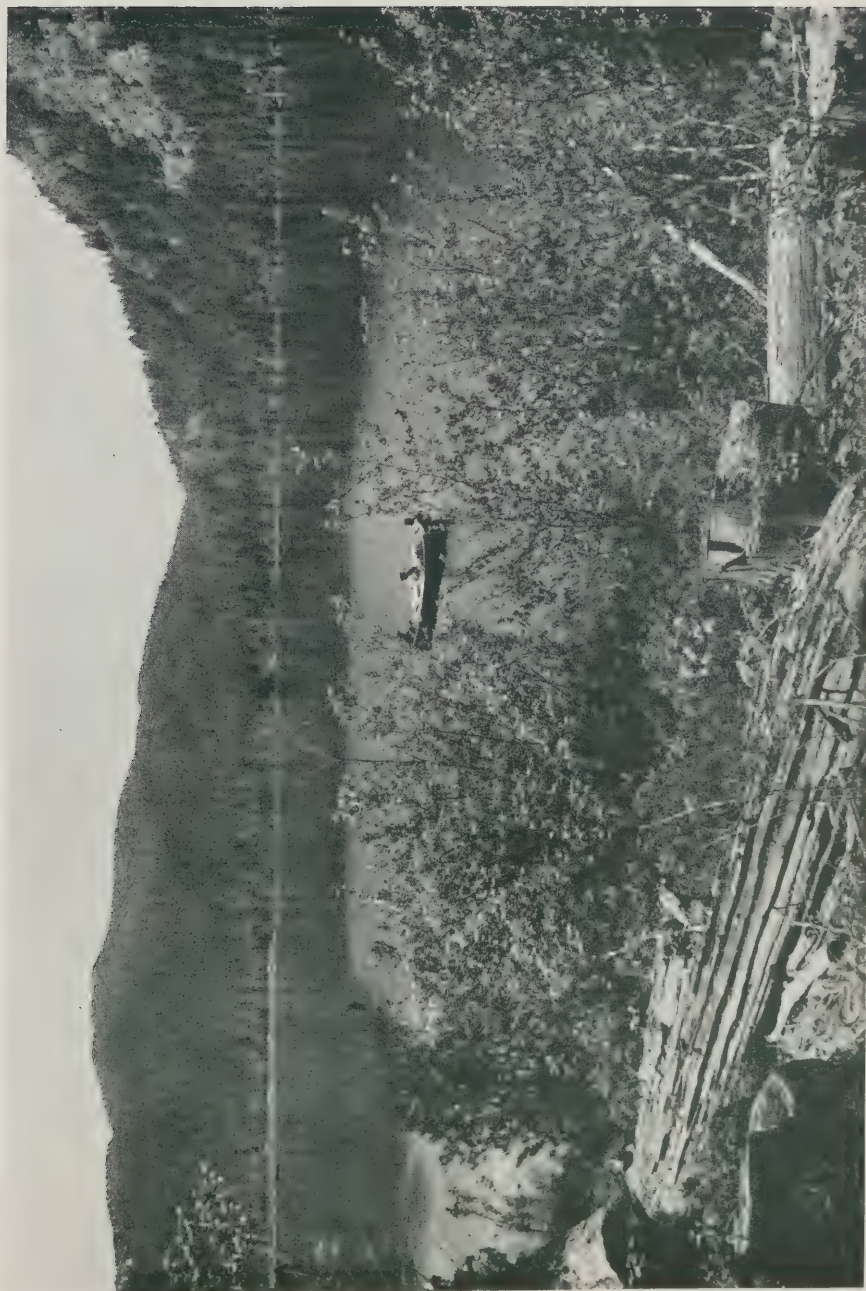
—Dr. Lambert.



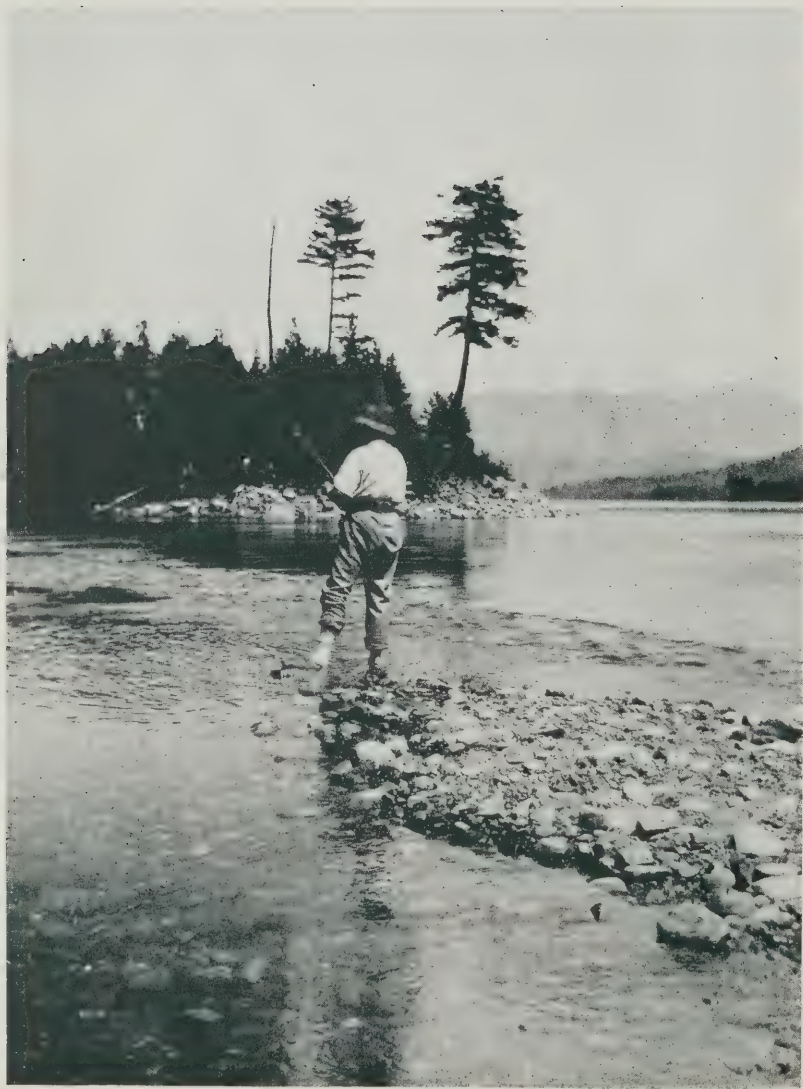
Gaffing a 10-pound trout in Okanagan Lake, near Vernon.



Capilano River. The resort of many anglers of the City of Vancouver.



Great Central Lake, near Alberni. The best fishing with a fly is at the mouths of the streams at the head and at the outlet in June and July.



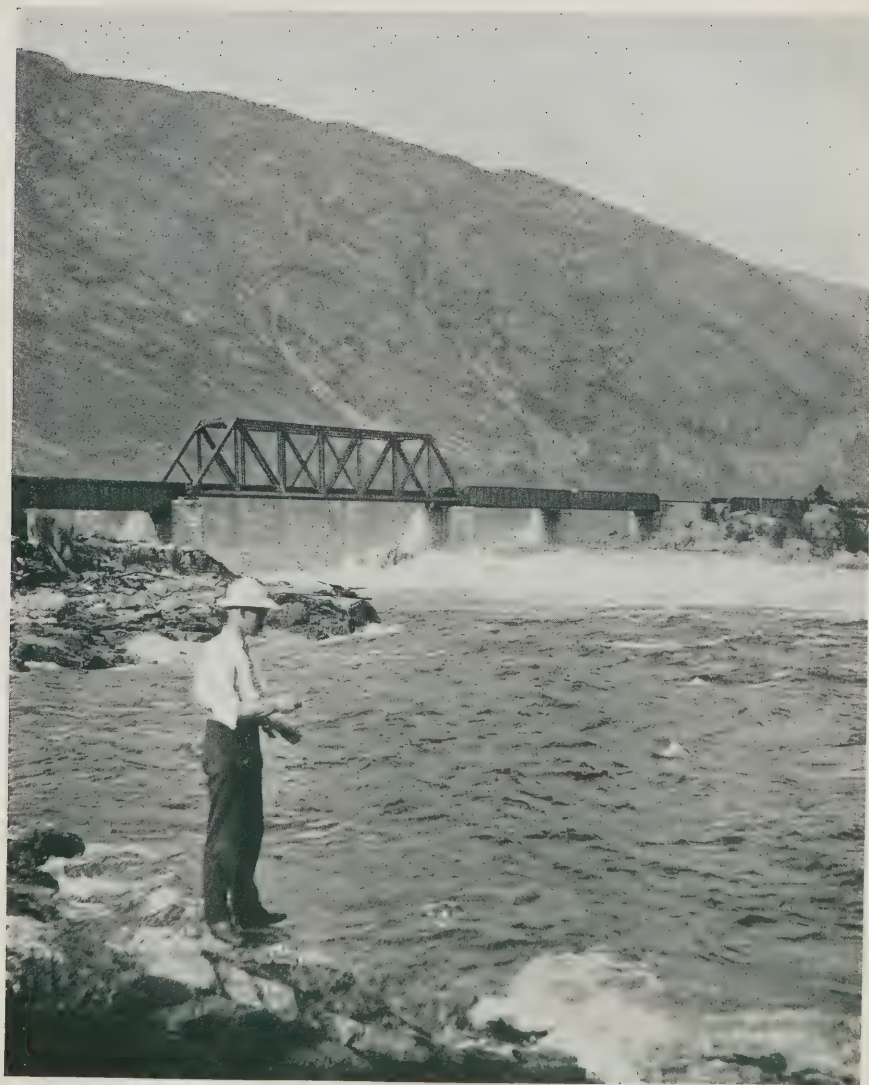
At the confluence of the Sloan and the Kootenay Rivers.



Okanagan Lake Indian fishermen. "The best months for fly-fishing in the Okanagan Lake region are April, May, September, and October."—Leckie-Ewing.



Caught in a tributary of the Squamish River. Reached from the City of Vancouver. These forty trout weighed 203 pounds.



**Kootenay River at C. P. Ry. crossing, below Nelson. Season, July
to November.**

